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ABSTRACT

The sample consisted of 109 women in traditionally male professions and 112 women in traditionally female professions with a mean age of 51.8. Subject selection was based on whether women were under-represented or over-represented in particular fields as stated in the 1950 U.S. census. The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, the Adjective Check List, and the Biographical Questionnaire were employed. The findings indicate that women in traditionally male professions and women in traditionally female professions differed significantly on five of the sixteen personality factors, i.e., Factor A, Outgoing vs. Reserved, Factor B, Less Intelligent vs. More Intelligent, Factor H, Threat-sensitive vs. Venturesome, Factor M, Practical vs. Imaginative, and Factor N, Forthright vs. Shrews. Compared with women in general, both groups were emotionally stable, assertive, serious, conscientious, sensitive, adaptable, self-assured, experimental, self-sufficient, and self-controlled. Significant evidence of gradual development in masculine personality traits of women in traditionally male professions is provided by their own statements of being more independent and assertive. (Author)

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PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT WOMEN

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Early work on career development theory, whether the trait-factor theory, the sociological theory, the self-concept theory, or the personality theory, contribute meager knowledge to our understanding of women's career choices and vocational development. In recent years, attempts have been made to formulate a theory of vocational development of women (Mathews, 1963; Psathas, 1968; Zytowski, 1969; and Wolfson, 1972), yet none has constituted a suitable framework as a base for future research. The major difficulty in formulating such a theory may be due partly to the role continuity and discontinuity of women in their various life stages. It may also be due to the fact that research findings in women's vocational interests, attitudes, values, and participation are inconsistent. This inconsistency, in turn, may be the result of obtaining data limited to adolescence and early womanhood. Research extended to a more mature age, when women have experienced marriage and vocation, may shed more light on the career development of women.

Levitt (1971), when reviewing empirical research which investigated personal and environmental variables that account for female occupational development, revealed that subjects in most of the studies were high school girls, college women, or young working women. Rarely were there adult women over age thirty-five. Among the variables that influenced a female's vocational choice and participation the factor of personality seemed to be a promising avenue of exploration. Measured

interests by the SVIB-W during college were not predictive of participation in the labor force or career commitment after college.

Baruch (1967) found that subjects with higher achievement motivation were likely to be employed, while those with average or low achievement motivation were not. Whether a woman chooses a male or female dominated profession depended first (Kriger, 1972) on her decision to pursue a career versus a home making commitment, followed by her choice of a specific occupational area. The field and level of a woman's occupation was found to relate to her level of achievement motivation. Wolkon (1972) found pioneer career women were less concerned with economic motives in their work than with the satisfactions of mastery and independence motives. Eyde (1968) studied the work motivation of alumnae of 1953 and of 1958 and found the former indicated a stronger desire for independence than the later, suggesting that the desire for independence in women may have a developmental aspect. Mulvey (1963) investigating the career patterns of 475 women who had graduated 20 to 27 years previously from high school, and concluded that level of education and level of aspiration were the most important determinants of career pattern, and that career patterns were closely related to the life development cycle. As of late, concern has been centred on mid-life career change (Brim, 1974; Hiestand, 1971; Clopton, 1973). Examining some of the issues, trends, and problems of career change reflected in the literature, Kelleher (1973) indicated that education, personality factors, and life circumstances are

associated with career change in middle life.

This paper attempts to study the personality characteristics of adult women in traditionally male professions and traditionally female professions in the hope to provide information to those who are seeking a theory of vocational development in women as to how personality growth and educational advancement may influence career interest and a vocational shift of the professional women from the female domain to the male domain.

METHOD

Sample

The subjects in this study were selected from rosters of thirty Michigan branches of a women's club whose members were executives and professionals. Subject selection was based on whether women were under represented or over represented in particular fields as stated in the 1960 U.S. Census. Four hundred eighty-nine selected members were invited to participate in the study. Of this number the 299 who indicated a willingness to participate were sent the research instruments. Two hundred twenty-one completed and returned these instruments.

Of the women responding, 109 were in traditionally male professions, and 112 were in traditionally female professions. Two hundred and five were working full-time, 13 part-time, and 3 retired. Sixteen were below the age of 30; 21 between the ages of 31-40; 80 between the ages of 41-55; and 103 were older than 56. The mean age was 51.8. Eighty-five were single; 82 were married; 27 divorced; and 27 widowed.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS IN TRADITIONALLY MALE PROFESSIONS AND TRADITIONALLY FEMALE PROFESSIONS

Traditionally Male Professions	N	Traditionally Female Professions	N
Accountant & Auditor	4	Elementary school principal	11
Architect	1	Elementary school teacher	16
Attorney	6	School counselor	6
Engineer	1	Supervisor, adult vocational education	1
Physician	5	Librarian, head	3
Chiropractor	3	Librarian, division head	6
Veterinarian	1	Librarian	26
Pharmacist	3	Director of nursing	10
Department head in university	3	Assistant director of nursing	1
Associate dean of students	4	Nurse	8
Professor	2	Director of social service	4
Associate professor	3	Deputy director of social service	1
Assistant professor	4	Social worker	12
Division director in college	3	Director of dietitian	1
College lecturer/instructor	4	Dietitian	3
Registrar, college	1	Home economist	3
College counselor	3		
Director, executive	16		
Assistant director	2		
President, business enterprise	6		
Vice president	6		
Manager, office	21		
Manager, banking	2		
Manager, real estate	2		
Professional pilot	1		
Deputy sheriff	1		
Minister	1		
Total	109		112

Research Instruments

The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (Form A, 1967-68 edition) was administered to the total population. A source-trait score (in standard score--Sten--ranging from 1 to 10) on each of the sixteen factor was assigned to each subject. The profile matching technique described in the Handbook for the 16PF (Cattell, Eber, and Tatsuoka, 1970) was used in plotting all the personality profiles. The split-half reliability for each of the factor scales range from +.71 to +.93. Internal construct validates range from +.73 to +. 96.

The Adjective Check List with its 27-item creativity scale served as the basis for selection of creative subjects in correlation with the 16PF.*

The Biographical Questionnaire was especially constructed to elicit data from women who were married, divorecd, or single professionals in terms of their background experiences, opionions and attitudes toward the professions and marriage.

Treatment of the Data

All data were statistically computerized. The PSCD computer program was applied to analyze the data derived from the 16PF Questionnaire. Comparison between groups and within groups were

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* Creative subjects are not discussed in this paper. This paper presents only part of the data in the study.

based on the personality variables analyzed using Fisher's t-ratio with respect to mean value. The PSCF BLITZ computer program was employed for analysing biographical data derived from the Biographical Questionnaire.

RESULTS

Personality Variables

Women in traditionally male professions and women in traditionally female professions were found to be different in their overall personality patterns, but not significantly different on a number of basic personality variables. The groups differed significantly on only five of the sixteen factors, suggesting a certain degree of overlap, as well as differences between the two groups. These five factors were Factor A ($p<.001$ Reserved vs. Outgoing), Factor B ($p<.05$ Less Intelligent vs. More Intelligent), Factor H ($p<.001$ Threat-Sensitive vs. Venturesome), Factor M ($p<.05$ Practical vs. Imaginative), and Factor N ($p<.001$ Forthright vs. Shrewd).

The two professional groups, with a large number of personality variables insignificantly different, showed much similarities in personality characteristics. The most similar ones were found in Factor C (Emotionally Stable), Factor E (Assertive), Factor F (Serious), Factor G (Conscientious), Factor I (Sensitive), Factor L (Adaptable), Factor O (Self-Assured), Factor Q_1 (Experimenting), Factor Q_2 (Self-Sufficient), Factor Q_3 (Self-Controlled), and

PROFILES FOR 16 PERSONALITY FACTOR QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES OF
TRADITIONALLY MALE PROFESSIONAL GROUP AND TRADITIONALLY FEMALE PROFESSIONAL GROUP

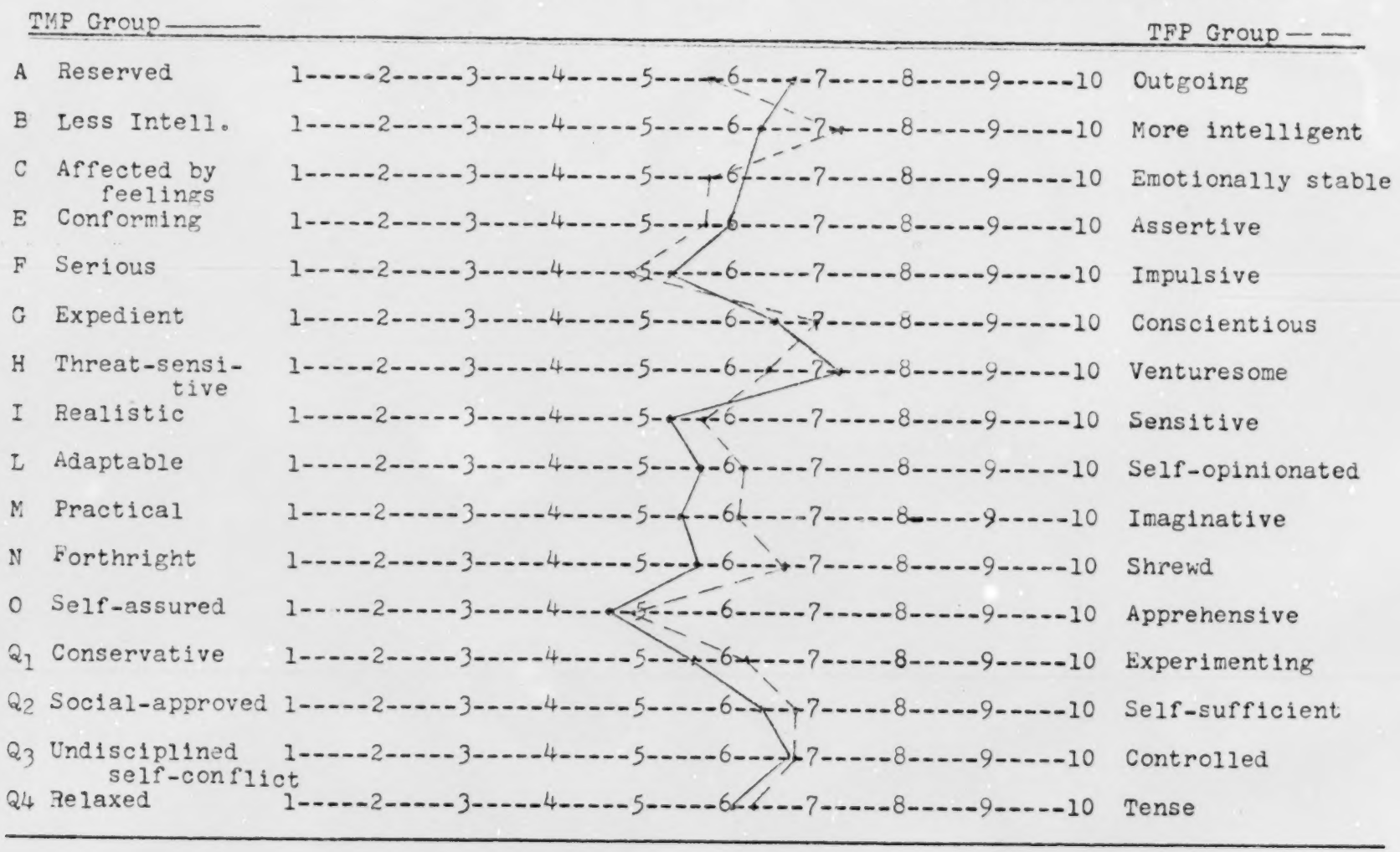

TABLE 2

RAW SCORE MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATION, T-STATISTICS FOR TRAITS MEASURED BY THE 16 PF QUESTIONNAIRE

Variable	TMP Group		TFP Group		t	DF	Probability
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.			
Reserved vs. Out-going	12.43	3.02	11.07	3.17	3.25	217	.001
Less intell. vs. More intelligent	8.43	1.81	9.07	1.65	-2.74	217	.05
Affected by feel. vs. Emot. stable	16.26	3.75	15.56	3.86	1.35	217	NS
Conforming vs. Assertive	11.02	4.82	10.52	4.12	0.83	217	NS
Serious vs. Impulsive	12.75	4.49	11.97	4.14	1.34	217	NS
Expedient vs. Conscientious	14.17	3.18	13.95	3.19	0.51	217	NS
Threat-sensitive vs. Venturesome	16.54	5.39	14.30	5.51	3.03	217	.001
Realistic vs. Sensitive	12.72	3.63	13.69	3.22	-2.10	217	NS
Adaptable vs. Self-opinionated	5.75	2.87	6.29	2.74	-1.37	217	NS
Practical vs. Imaginative	12.96	3.80	14.18	3.52	-2.46	217	.05
Forthright vs. Shrewd	10.17	3.04	11.65	3.04	-3.58	217	.001
Self-assured vs. Apprehensive	8.34	4.23	9.00	4.12	-1.17	217	NS
Conservative vs. Experimenting	7.34	3.23	8.12	4.45	-1.48	217	NS
Social-approved vs. Self-suffi.	10.83	3.11	11.76	3.53	-2.08	217	NS
Self-conflict vs. Controlled	14.38	3.14	14.55	7.07	-0.24	217	NS
Relaxed vs. Tense	13.17	4.63	14.14	5140	-1.43	217	NS

Factor Q4 (Tense), suggesting that the two groups were all emotionally stable, assertive, serious, conscientious, sensitive, adaptable, self-assured, experimenting, self-sufficient, self-controlled, and more tense than women in general.

Biographical Variables

Both women in traditionally male professions and women in traditionally female professions seemed to share a tendency of personality development leaning toward masculinity. This is evidenced by their own assessment of becoming more independent and assertive.

Women in traditionally male professions aspired to join a profession in the male domain when in junior high school. This aspiration correlated positively with advancement in educational level, suggesting that women in traditionally male professions were extremely persistent in professional pursuits, inspite of internal conflict and ambivalence in femininity and achievement success experienced during adolescence and young womanhood.

Only one-third of women in traditionally male professions had their collegiate major in male-oriented professions, and obtained their B.A. degree and M.A. degree in the male professions, whereas more than 90% of women in traditionally female professions took a female major field and earned their B.A. degree and M.A. degree in female professions. This finding indicates the shifting of professions, mainly from female professions to male professions. The switch did not occur in graduate school, but after college, peaking at age forty.

TABLE 3

SELF PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT, DEGREE MAJOR, AND TRADITIONALLY MALE OR FEMALE PROFESSIONS CONSIDERED AT VARIOUS LIFE STAGES

Variable	TMP* N	TMP* %	TFP** N	TFP** %	x^2	Sig. level
Self personality assessment						
Traditionally feminine	34	31.8	45	42.9	3.28	.05
More independent and assertive	73	68.2	60	57.1		
College major field						
Male-oriented	32	38.6	9	8.8	21.757	.001
Female-oriented	51	61.4	93	91.2		
B.A. degree						
Male profession	36	37.5	7	6.4	28.234	.001
Female profession	60	62.5	103	93.6		
M.A. degree						
Male profession	12	30.0	1	1.4	17.026	.001
Female profession	28	70.0	68	98.6		
Professions considered at junior high school						
Male profession	13	21.7	5	7.6		
Female profession	43	71.7	60	90.9	7.894	.05
Glamour/ ntertaining	4	6.6	1	1.5		
Professions considered at senior high school						
Male profession	25	28.7	7	7.1		
Female profession	54	62.1	85	86.7		
Glamour/Entertaining	4	4.6	2	2.0	17.647	.01
Male and female	2	2.3	3	3.1		
Religious	2	2.3	1	1.1		
Professions considered in college						
Male profession	31	41.3	8	8.8	22.447	.001
Female profession	44	58.7	83	91.2		
Professions considered after college						
Male profession	32	61.5	4	5.4	44.441	.001
Female profession	20	38.5	70	94.6		

* Traditionally Male professional group
** Traditionally female professional group

DISCUSSION

Personality Variables

Sex-typing of occupations is classified according to the nature of work or the percentage of men or women working in them. Occupations requiring qualities of detachment, analytic thinking, objectivity, intellectual assertion, and competition are considered as male professions. Occupations requiring qualities of nurturance, empathy, sensitivity, subjectivity, and helping or caring are regarded as female professions. Women in male professions are therefore viewed as independent, persisitent, ambitious, competitive, assertive, cool, analytic and objective. Conversely the image of women in the female occupational sphere includes qualities of personal warmth, grace and charm, empathy and sensitivity, compliance and subjectivity.

Table 2 shows that women in traditionally male professions and women in traditionally female professions were different in their overall personality patterns, but not significantly different on a number of basic personality variables. The groups differed significantly on only five of the sixteen factors, suggesting a certain degree of overlap, as well as differences between the groups.

First, women in traditionally male professions were more outgoing, adaptable, and casual than women in traditionally female professions. Since in this study half of the subjects in the male occupational aphere were business executives and managers,

this personality could be expected. The subjects in traditionally female professions were more reserved, rigid and precise. This implies that they were cautious and wary, inhibited in both behavior and emotions.

Secondly, although both professional groups were high in intelligence compared with women in general, women in traditionally male professions were slightly inferior in intelligence to women in traditionally female professions. This characteristic may be attributed to the fact that,being less outgoing, women in traditionally female professions naturally developed more intellectual interests at home. These interests include reading, artistic pursuit and pastime activities which demand mental ability. It is not surprising to find women in traditionally female professions to be more sensitive, intuitive, introspective, imaginative, and excelling in abstract thinking than women in traditionally male professions.

All professional women were found to be more adventurous and socially bolder than women in general. Women in traditionally male professions were significantly more so and were less inhibited by environmental threats.

It was found that women in traditionally male professions were rather practical and conventional while women in traditionally female professions were more imaginative and had a higher degree of subjectivity and sensitivity. Conversely, they might have a greater degree of internal anxiety, conflict, and sentiments than women in traditionally male professions.

Lastly, women in traditionally female professions were

revealed as much more shrewd in tactical skills dealing with people and situations than women in traditionally male professions who were more natural, contented, and trustful.

Nevertheless, with a large number of personality variables insignificantly different, the two professional groups were all emotionally stable, assertive, serious, conscientious, sensitive, adaptable, self-assured, experimenting, self-sufficient, self-controlled, and more tense than women in general.

Biographical Variables

More than two-thirds of women in traditionally male professions and more than half of women in traditionally female professions assessed their personality as becoming more independent and assertive. This may suggest that masculinity-femininity continues to change as a function of age, and that in middle life women become domineering, independent, and unsentimental (Gutman, 1972), repossessing the masculinity that was inhibited since adolescence. This finding supports Kubie's (1974) concept of an unconscious drive to become both sexes, and Jungian assumption that every person has both masculine and feminine potential. The question is whether most persons invest heavily in their personal or social roles, so that one set of potential is developed while the other remains largely unconscious. It is logical to infer that age leads a woman, either in traditionally male professions or female professions, to become more masculine, and that this gradual development correlates with her achievement needs at the age of

forty. Bardwick (1971) also assumes that women feel the need to perceive themselves as able and independent, although this need develops later than it does in men.

As to why more women in traditionally male professions claimed that they had become more independent and assertive than women in traditionally female professions, a plausible answer is that different occupations require different behavior or role playing. Working in a male-oriented profession requiring decision making, analytic thinking, intellectual assertion and competition gradually influences one's manner of behavior or personality. It is rational to assume that one is not firmly moult in his personality at the time of occupational entry. After exposure to activities and a working climate of a demanding nature for a long period of time, an integration of personality in masculinity and femininity may emerge. Another explanation is that one, upon perceiving masculinity as more valuable and efficient in work, may reduce certain femininity traits that were unrelated to work and thus develops latent masculinity traits to cope with the working situation.

It was found that women in traditionally female professions were consistent in their expressed interests to work in the female domain across age levels. The finding confirms several studies (Tyler, 1964; Austin, 1968; Rand and Miller, 1972). However, women in tralitionally male professions aspired to work in the male domain when in junior high school. This aspiration correlated positively with advancement in educational level and continued to increase even after college. This may suggest that

increased interest in masculine ooccupational territory may be the result of environmental or personality factors. Masculine achievement may have been encouraged in adolescence as a result of increased interest in working in the male domain; or defiant women from the lower social-economic class homes may have sought upward mobility, therefore rejecting traditionally female professions. Achievement-oriented women have tended to cherish a greater commitment at work, and the more masculine the occupation, the greater the commitment exerted, and the greater the satisfaction felt. Finally ambitious and competitive women have aimed at masculine professions as a ladder to prestige and honor. This is particularly true of creative and talented women who wish to succeed in life through their own efforts. The finding also suggests that higher education may have an impact on women's vocational interests and development. It is a general consensus that a higher education enables a woman to widen her horizon, to live a fuller life, and to prepare for professions offering greater achievement and honor. Thus a woman who pressed further into the academic world may develop more masculine goals and values, and aiming at masculine achievement for higher self-identity and self-evaluation.

It may be noticed that only one-third of women in traditionally male professions majored in college in male-oriented fields and obtained their B.A. and M.A. degrees in the male professions, whereas more than 90% of women in traditionally female prefessions took a female major field and earned their B.A. and M.A. degrees in female professions. This finding indicates the shifting of

professions, mainly from the female domain to the male domain. The switch did not occur in graduate school, but came after college. To interpret such a finding two plausible explanations which relate to life circumstances and personality factors may be justified. First, a woman may earn a M.A. degree in a female profession, then shift to a male profession. She may, for example, advance to teach at the college level, be promoted to an administrative post in a secondary school, hospital, or a social organization. Heistand (1971) found men and women doing graduate work made a major career shift after the age of 35. Secondly, talented women with personality characteristics of independence, assertion, and persistence, who are committed and motivated, may later in life cross the sex barrier to assume an executive or managerial position which is at a higher level of responsibility and prestige.

As Thomas (1975) has indicated, the area of mid-life career change or stability needs more research. In order to understand the career development of women, life stages beyond the college years, as proposed by Levitt (1971), should be examined. So should be the relationships between age and personality, between work environment and personality, and between education and career change. Is personality change being affected by age or work situations or both? Is career shift being motivated by change in personality traits, by higher academic attainment, or by other motivational factors such as values, goals, sense of achievement and job satisfaction? Such questions demand answers.

To conclude, the findings of this study suggest (1) that interest in male occupational fields increases from early adole-

scence to womanhood in women in traditionally male professions, whereas interest in female occupational fields persists in women in traditionally female fields; (2) Professional women tend to develop masculinity traits such as independence and assertion in their personality; and (3) professional women tend to change their career in middle age mainly from the female domain to the male domain.

This study is only exploratory in nature. It is hoped that further research will validate these data to help in formulating a theory of vocational development of women.

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